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The Valley of the Merrimack.

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By JOSEPH B. WALKER, Esq.

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## NOTE.

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The following address, first published in the 7th Volume of the Collections of the New Hampshire Historical Society, is presented in its present form for farther distribution.

N. BOUTON, *Editor of 7th Vol.*  
*of Coll. of N. H. Hist. Society.*

CONCORD, N. H., May, 1863.





## THE VALLEY OF THE MERRIMACK.

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*Mr. President and Gentlemen of the Society; Ladies and Gentlemen* :—Your attention is this afternoon invited to some remarks upon our beautiful Merrimack and its Valley. Our subject is a familiar one, yet, we have hoped that, notwithstanding its want of novelty, a brief glance at their physical features, at the early occupation of the valley by the aborigines, and its subsequent discovery and settlement by the whites, as well as at several other kindred topics, if our hour shall permit us to make to them a brief allusion, may not prove altogether profitless or uninteresting.

From whence comes this word Merrimack, and who can tell us its signification? for the people who invented it have perished, and theirs has become not only a dead, but a lost language. A scanty vocabulary of some of its most common words, imperfect at best, and but partially reliable, is all that remains of it.

This name is frequently met with in the early Colonial Records of Massachusetts, and is sometimes written “Merremack,”\* and at others “Monomack.” Although always applied to the same stream, and not very unlike in sound, the words Merremack and Monomack differ widely in original signification. The former, according to Judge Potter, was invented by the Northern Indians, and its etymology is “merruh;” strong, and “auke,” place; the place of strong current,—a term not inappropriate, when we consider the former length and frequency of the river’s rapids, now for the most part flowed out by the dams which the great manufacturing interests have thrown across its stream. The latter,

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\* This word is variously spelled. In the petition of the inhabitants of the County of Essex, Mass., for a grant of land at Penacook, in 1721, it is written “Merrimake” and “Merrymake”; in the Records of the Proprietors of Penacook, “Merrimack,” and in the Colonial Records of Massachusetts, “Merimacke,” “Merimack” and “Merrimacke.”

“Monomack,” we are told, was the name applied to the river by the Massachusetts Indians, best acquainted with its lower sections, and derived from “Mona,” island, and “auke,” place, the island place; a term also quite appropriate, on account of the number and importance to the Indians of the beautiful islands, that like emeralds adorn its bosom, and divide its stream.

The earliest mention we have found of the Merrimack, is by the French Calvinist, De Monts, who, heading an expedition from Havre, March 7, 1604, made settlements that year at Port Royal and upon the island of St. Croix. The Northern Indians told him of a beautiful river at the South, which they called the “Merremack.” The year following, 1605, Sieur De Champlain, following the directions of Indians met at Piscataqua Bay, made actual discovery of it and named it “Riviere du Gas.” This doubtless, was its first discovery by white men. But it did not long retain the name thus given it. Its old Indian appellation has ever adhered to it.

At the commencement of its settlement by the whites, the Valley of the Merrimack was in the occupation of some half a dozen different tribes of Nipmuck Indians, located at different points along the river from Winnepisseogee Lake to the Ocean.

Its lower section for some miles was in the possession of the Agawams. Farther up, near where Lowell now stands, lived the Wamesits or Pawtucketts. About the mouths of the streams still bearing their names, dwelt the Nashuas and Souhegans. Above the falls and rapids that now afford motive power to the most extensive manufactories of our State, resided the Namoskeags; while the broad intervalles, verdant and fertile, of the present towns of Bow, Concord, Boscawen and Canterbury, were held by the Penacooks, the most powerful of all these tribes. Still farther North, at “Aquedahtan,” near the outlet and upon the shores of our great lake, lived the Winnepisseogees. These all acknowledged the sovereign authority of Passaconaway, the great Sachem of the Penacooks, and from this circumstance, perhaps, they bore collectively among the English, the general name of Penacooks.

The various characteristics which distinguished the other New England tribes, adhered to the Indians of this Valley. They made no advances in civilization, but led the unsettled life of the forest. Theirs were the usual Indian occupations of hunting, fish-



ing and war, with so much of the practice of a rude agriculture, as would afford them a limited supply of beans, maize, pumpkins and tobacco. The river yielded them fish in great abundance, and for the purpose of securing supplies of salmon, shad, eels and alewives, they assembled at stated seasons at the falls of Amoskeag, Hookset, Wamesit, Penacook and other similar places of more or less note. Indeed the very name "Wamesit," the place of large assembly, arises from the fact of the Indians collecting here, in large numbers, from far and near, in April and May, to secure at Pawtucket Falls, near by, their usual supply of fish for the ensuing season. The woods abounding in game, by trapping and the chase, they secured meats in abundance, together with a sufficiency of furs and skins for their beds and their wardrobes.

The Indian tribes have ever been addicted to war, and those of this valley cannot be cited as affording an exception to this general rule. The sanguinary battle between the Mohawks and Penacooks at Sugar Ball Plain, just across the river and within a mile of the place of our present assembling, was a sample of the conflicts frequently waged, where Indian energy, cunning, cruelty and revenge combined to make Indian warfare horrible.

Their religious notions were extremely crude. At the installation of the first minister of this place, in 1730, the Rev. Mr. Barnard, of Andover, told the early settlers, in his ordination discourse, that Satan formerly had his seat at Penacook, and "that the devil was wont to be invocated there by God forsaken salvages,"\* an utterance not very highly complimentary to the

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\* Passaconaway, the Bashaba of the Merrimaek Valley, was regarded, says Hubbard, "as a great sorcerer and his fame was widely spread. It was said of him that he could cause a green leaf to grow in Winter, trees to dance, water to burn, &c."

Whittier, in his beautiful poem entitled the Bridal of Penacook, representing the current belief of the Indians, says of him :

"For that chief had magic skill,  
And a Panisee's dark will,  
Over powers of good and ill,  
Powers which bless and powers which ban —  
Wizard lord of Pennacook,  
Chiefs upon their war-path shook,  
When they met the steady look  
Of that wise dark man."

native gentlemen, whose lands were now wanted by our Christian forefathers.

But the loving heart of the Apostle Elliot had before this yearned for their enlightenment, and threading the dense forests he had often visited them at Pawtucket, at Nashua, and at Namoskeag. Nor were his efforts fruitless, for he established schools among them, and preached to them with success. Through his instrumentality many were converted to Christianity, and in 1648, the great Sagamon, Passaconaway, renounced the superstitions of his fathers and embraced Christianity at Pawtucket. Twenty years afterwards Wanalanet, his son and successor, professed the same faith, in presence of Elliot, Gen. Gookin, and large numbers of his people, and his subsequent life attested the sincerity of the act.

The agriculture of the aborigines was quite limited in extent. They tilled but small patches of the rich intervals and uplands of the Valley, which were left for the most part in their natural state. They understood however pretty well the culture of pumpkins, beans, tobacco, and maize, and selected with rare discrimination the soils best adapted to their production. When in the course of time, the soil became worn, they occasionally increased its fertility by dropping a fish in the corn hill at planting; but this is about the only instance that comes down to us of their use of fertilizers. These labors however, little relished by the lords of the forest, devolved principally upon their more patient squaws.

They also cleared other portions of the intervals which thereupon produced spontaneously and abundantly crops of a wild tall grass, resembling the prairie grass of the West, and which by an annual burning off in the autumn ever flourished luxuriantly. But they valued this merely as a food for the deer, which sought it in this vicinity, and at other points in great numbers. It was never cut and preserved, for no animals were domesticated to consume it. The nomads of the East have their flocks and herds, but it was not so with the Indians. Theirs was a lower social state than that of the modern Bedouin of the desert. The parts of the intervals not cleared, were covered with a dense growth of elms, bass, butternuts, maples and other deciduous trees.

The Indian made but a slight impress upon the natural features of our Valley. No vestiges of carefully constructed highways, no



crumbling arches of bridges that once spanned the streams, no mouldering ruins of stately buildings are anywhere to be found; for his highway was a forest trail, his bridge a prostrate tree, his house a fragile wigwam. An arrow-head, occasionally thrown up by the plow, or a few skeletons disinterred by modern excavations, now and then attest their former presence, and remind us that the tribes, once possessors of the lands we now occupy, are an extinct people, and that their language and their history are in a great measure obliterated.

Passaconway had the sagacity early to perceive that all attempts to stay the wave of English immigration rapidly overspreading the territory of his people, must be vain; that they must retreat inland at the approach of a superior race and yield to them their lands, now coveted for higher purposes than those to which the aborigines had devoted them. He adopted therefore a pacific policy, and sought relations of friendship with his new neighbors, and at his death, which occurred about 1668, enjoined upon Wanalancet, his son and successor to the Sagamonship, a like course of action. This the latter carried out with fidelity, even at the cost of the fealty of a considerable portion of his people, who left him and fled to the hostile standard of Kancamagus.

We have before alluded to the discovery of the Merrimack by Champlain, whose name is still with us and attaches to the beautiful lake that laves the opposite shores of Northern New York and Vermont. Little however, was known of it for many years, and its entire course was supposed to be a continuation of that which it pursued from the sea to Pawtucket Falls. This misconception proved, ere long, a serious one, serving as it did for the boundary line of several important and extensive grants of territory. For the Marianna grant made in 1621, by the Plymouth Council to Mason, had for its Northeastern boundary line the "River Merrimack to the head waters thereof." So the Laconia Grant, made the following year, to Gorges and Mason, was bounded on the Southeast by this river. It also appears by the celebrated Wheelwright deed of 1629, to have been one of the boundary lines of the territory embraced in that instrument, and Mason's New Hampshire Grant had, too, for one of its lines "the Merrimack River to the farthest head thereof."

But where was "the farthest head thereof?" This became, ere many years, a question of grave importance to the residents in the Southern part of New Hampshire, for on the 31st of May, 1652, it was decided by the General Court of the Colony of Massachusetts Bay, that the extent of their North line was "from the Northernmost part of the river Merrimack, and three miles more North, where it is to be found, and thence upon a straight line, East and West, to either sea," a line somewhat more liberal than our Massachusetts friends were subsequently able to maintain, although in the language of the record, it was voted the true one, "by the whole Court," and the farthest head of the river, determined by their commissioners to be at Aquedahtan, at the outlet of "Winnapuscahit Lake."\*

This might possibly have fixed the point for all coming time, had it not been for the fact that, a few miles below, another branch, of equal or superior volume, was found to exist, and which, pursuing a more Northerly course, could be traced to the very chin of the Profile of Cannon Mountain, in Franconia; and farther still, by various other tributaries, to the base of Moosehillock and to the Western slopes of the White Mountains, flowing now with a deep and silent current, beneath the shadows of the bordering woods, and then, at intervals, as if wearied with so staid a course, gliding swiftly down perilous rapids, or dashing over more perilous cascades, and throwing back, as in sport, the sunlight that penetrated anon the dense foliage that arched its way.

We would not, at this late day, ask which of these two streams was the true Merrimack, or at the sources of which "the farthest head thereof," was to be sought, as all questions depending thereon have been long settled; but rather, in a spirit of compromise and by a kind of gallant personification, regard one as the daughter of the magnificent Lake, which the great Spirit had adorned with wooded shores and green islands and his own smile, and the other as the stalwart son of the Old Man of the Mountain, whose face of rock, "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ages to come," ever

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\* These commissioners were Capt. Edward Johnson and Capt. Simon Willard. They decided August 1, 1652, that the farthest head of the Merrimack was at the outlet of Winnipisseogee Lake, and their initials have been found cut upon a large rock near this point.



watches with solicitude his outgoings, accord to each a separate independent importance and individuality. But when ere long, by some mysterious, divine sympathy, their streams converge, and the manly salutation of the latter rushing in hot haste over the Eastman falls, at Franklin, is answered by the milder, yet unmistakably assenting response of the former, as just across the hill, she dances smilingly down her rocky way, and sweeps gracefully around the meadow's bank, the question of precedence is settled by a union nothing can sunder.

For the Winnepesaukee, so sprightly and mild,  
Of a beauteous mother, the more beautiful child,  
Would you guess it, would you guess it?  
Gives her fair self to the wild Pemigewasset.

From this point of union, thus formed, the Merrimack, with a broader stream, flows onward to the sea. For the first sixty miles its course is Southerly. At Chelmsford it makes a sudden deflection to the left, and thence in a direction a little North of East, pursues its way to the Atlantic, at Newburyport. It is enlarged from time to time, by many considerable tributaries, which increase very much the volume of its stream. The Contoocook enters it at Fisherville, and a few miles farther on the Soucook and the Suncook contribute their waters from the East, and the Turkey river its from the West. At Goffstown it receives the Piscataquog, and at Merrimack the Souhegan. At Nashua it receives the stream of that name, and others still, as we descend, contribute to swell its volume, until at length, a magnificent stream, its wide waters mingle with the wider waters of the Atlantic, and are lost, even as the streams of our earthly lives will ere long be lost, in the boundless life to which we are hastening.

There are many points along the river's course where its descent is rapid and abrupt, affording important powers for manufacturing purposes. The falls at Campton, Bridgewater and Franklin on the Pemigewasset; and at Meredith, Sanbornton and Northfield on the Winnipisseogee, are considerable, and have been turned to profitable account. The most important, however, are on the Merrimack itself, which affords water powers scarcely surpassed by any in the country. The fall at Hookset is sixteen feet, that at Manchester fifty-four feet, that at Lowell thirty feet, and that at Lawrence twenty-six feet, while the aggregate fall,



from the outlet of Winnipisseogee Lake to the ocean, is no less than 478 feet.\*

The Valley of the Merrimack presents several features of much interest to the geologist. The valley is not the work of the river, as is oftentimes the case, but is of an anterior origin, and must have been formed, either by denudation or by an upheaval of the strata on either side of it by a force acting from beneath. Subsequently to its formation, it has been partially filled up by extensive deposits of yellow diluvial sand. These may be seen at different points throughout nearly its entire length, varying however very much in depth and extent. Where the valley is narrow and its sides steep, these deposits, necessarily conformable to their boundaries, are also narrow; but where it widens and its sides have a gradual ascent, they are often several miles in width. In this vicinity, for instance, this formation, varying in depth from ten to seventy feet, extends for many miles in length up and down the river, and laterally some fifteen miles Westerly to Warner, and from three to seven miles Easterly and North Easterly to Pembroke and Loudon.

Where sections of this diluvium have been exposed by the river it has generally been found to consist of a light yellowish sand, occasionally underlaid by deposits of blue clay, not unfrequently lying in thin strata, and alternating with courses of sand with equal thickness. At other times it rests upon a bluish formation resembling marl, possessed of little adhesive power, and which whenever exposed to water is easily dissolved and undermines the superincumbent sand. An instance of this may be seen at the base of the bluff opposite that part of our interval known as the Fan, where during a single season a tract of plain land three rods in width was undermined and precipitated into the river. The clay formation may be seen cropping out at various points not far distant, as on the south shore of Horse Shoe Pond, on the west bank of the river, at Farnum's eddy, and at several points near the centre of East Concord village.

Until within some fifteen or twenty years the extensive diluvial deposits known as the Plain, in Concord, was covered with a dense growth of hard pine, the "*Pinus Rigida*" of the botanists. This has been mostly removed and large portions of the plain are

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\* See Dr. Jackson's Geological Survey of New Hampshire.

now devoted to tillage. As the traveller passes up and down the valley, he will observe this lying upon both sides of the river, divided by a gorge of varying width, the flat bottom of which constitutes our interval or meadows, as they are elsewhere more generally called. This has undoubtedly been excavated by the river, whose stream, originally of equal elevation with the plains, has been for ages wandering from side to side, across its whole extent, now in this direction and now in that, and all the while deepening its channel as it flowed, until at length reaching the rocky formation beneath, its descent has been arrested and fixed where it now remains. During this period it has staggered through numberless devious courses, many of which may be easily traced. They are generally curvilinear, the stream having encroached upon and washed away the bank on one side, while it receded from and made deposits upon the shore opposite. While this depression of the channel was progressing the new made land was at first left at a lower elevation than that upon the opposite side, so that the comparative height of a particular section of interval not unfrequently indicates the comparative age of its formation.\*

Sometimes however these changes of the river's course are sudden and violent. The map of Concord, made in 1726, or thereabouts, shows two considerable tongues of land, lying beside and projecting by one another, but upon opposite sides of the river, which here pursued a devious course around and between them. In the course of time the distance in a direct line across the base of the first of these became reduced to about thirty rods, while the actual distance around it described by the river was no less than two hundred and thirty. Apparently wearied with this long circuit and preferring a shorter course, the river, during a freshet in 1824 made a direct breach, across the neck of this peninsular, and cut for itself a new channel in a single night, thereby transferring some thirty acres of land from its East to its West side. A few years later, the other projection was in like manner

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\* The sections of interval on the North and South sides of Wattanummons Brook illustrates this principle. Upon the latter the first settlers of Penacook found standing in 1727 the wigwams of the Indian sachem from whom this brook has derived its name, while very much of the former has been inside the limits of the river's channel within the memory of numerous persons now living.



cut off from the West and left upon the East side. The channels thus abandoned have been gradually filling up, and tons of hay are now annually cut where the river has flowed within a period of some thirty-five years.

The ordinary abrasions of the river's banks occur for the most part during the subsidence of freshets when the water in the channel is high and the current strong.\* A fresh North-West wind usually follows a freshet and urges the subsiding waters with much force against the steep banks. The result is the undermining and precipitation of them into the stream, by which the earth composing them is carried down and deposited outside the current, upon the flats below. These, thus gradually elevated, in a few years, rise above the water at its low stages, and ere long are covered with the willow and the white maple, which serve to arrest still more, the floating sand in times of high water, while, after a few years lapse, they not unfrequently attain an elevation that renders them profitable for cultivation.

The rebound of the river to the opposite shore, and its subsequent deflection back again, causes the sweeping curves of its channel, with which we are all familiar. It is however, a noticeable fact, that the river always cuts upon a Southerly shore and recedes from a Northerly one. I think this will be found upon extended observation to be true as a general rule. The cause is readily traced to the Southerly course of the river's current, and the prevalence of the North-westerly winds which accompany the freshets.

We pass now to the settlement of the Valley by the English. The first permanent settlement by white persons was at Quasacunquen, or Newbury. The historian Hubbard says, "the plantation at Agawam, now Ipswich, Mass., became so filled with inhabitants that some of them presently swarmed out into another place, a little further Eastward." In consequence of the crowded state of this settlement, the Rev. Thomas Parker, with a small colony who had emigrated from Wiltshire, in England, the year before, left Agawam in the Spring of 1635, and passing by boats through

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\* Very rarely does a spring pass without the occurrence of one or more spring freshets. Sometimes as many as three high ones have been known in a single season. The maximum perpendicular rise of the river above low water, in this vicinity, has been about twenty feet. During the ordinary freshets it varies from five or six to twelve or fifteen feet.

Plum Island Sound, made a settlement at Newbury. In the division of the lands which was soon after made, the scripture principle, "to him that hath shall be given," was curiously applied, and each settler received, in proportion to his ability to live without it, from ten to ten hundred and eighty acres of land.

The settlement was a prosperous one, and in a few years became populous beyond the expectations of its proprietors. Soon more land was wanted and explorations were made of the country farther up the river, and as a result, the Rev. John Ward, with twelve others, mostly from Newbury, made a settlement in 1640, on the North side of the river at Pentucket, and laid the foundations of Haverhill. For about seventy years this was a frontier town, and none in the entire valley suffered so much from Indian barbarity as did this. The stories of the repeated atrocities perpetrated upon its exposed inhabitants are familiar to us all.

During the same year (1640,) Rev. Ezekiel Rogers, who had recently emigrated from Rowley, in England, with his people, commenced another settlement near by, upon the opposite side of the river, which was the origin of Bradford. The Indian title to the township was not extinguished until more than half a century afterwards, (1701,) when it was purchased of the three heirs of Maschonomontic for six pounds and ten shillings, as appears by their deed of conveyance, bearing their respective characteristic signatures of a bow and arrow, a new moon and a serpent.

Two years previous to this, a grant was made of a plantation, on the North side of the river, opposite Newbury, to Simon Bradstreet, Dan'l Denison, and others. It was incorporated the next year by the name of Colchester, which was changed in 1640, to that of Salisbury. Upon the union of New Hampshire with Massachusetts in 1643, it became the shire town of the new county of Norfolk, and continued such until 1679, when a separate royal government was established in New Hampshire.

A few years later, in 1643, a settlement, mostly English, was made at Andover. The town was incorporated three years afterwards, and the Indian title to the lands was extinguished by a purchase made by Rev. Mr. Woodbridge, of Catschamache, Sagamore of the Massachusetts Indians, for a coat and six pounds in money.

Ten years after this, a quaintly worded petition was presented



to the General Court of Massachusetts, signed by thirty-nine persons, residents of Woburn and Concord, praying for a grant of land near Pawtucket Falls. This petition, which represents this locality "as a very comfortable place to accommodate a company of God's people upon," was granted; and in the course of eighteen months a settlement was commenced, a minister installed, and provision made for his support. This was the commencement of Chelmsford.

At some time previous to 1675, an important settlement was made at Dunstable by persons, in part at least, from Boston and vicinity. During King Philips' war, owing to the exposed condition of the township, all its citizens, with a single exception, retired to places of greater security in the lower towns. Col. John Tyng, however, who seems to have had little fear of the Indians, determined to remain upon the ground he considered rightfully his own, and defend it if he could. This purpose, which we are forced to admire, notwithstanding its rashness, he was enabled with the assistance of a few soldiers, sent him by the colony, to accomplish, so that this settlement was never wholly abandoned, even temporarily, as was the case with some others.

We pass on now some forty-five years to subsequent settlements, still farther up the river. About the time the Pilgrims emigrated to Plymouth, considerable numbers of Scotch Presbyterians, influenced by similar reasons, crossed the Irish Sea and planted themselves in the Northern part of Ireland, in the county of Ulster. We have not time to allude to the persecutions they suffered there. The siege of Derry is among the most memorable recorded in history. When a century had elapsed, a portion of their descendants, desiring a greater degree of freedom than was there accorded them, determined to seek new homes in New England. They arrived in Boston in 1718, and after careful inquiries and explorations had been made, a part of them with their pastor, the Rev. James McGregor, commenced a settlement at Londonderry. The enterprise was consecrated, on the very day of their arrival, by religious services under a large oak, on the Eastern shore of Beaver Pond.

It is to these Scotch Irish people, as they have been termed, that we owe the introduction of the potatoe to New England, and perhaps also, the culture and manufacture of flax. Accessions were



made from time to time to their number, and from this town several others, in the vicinity, received considerable numbers of their first settlers. This was particularly true of Bedford and Dunbarton.

Thus far Londonderry seems to have been the most Northern settlement upon the river. The boundary line of Massachusetts and New Hampshire was as yet unadjusted, and both colonies were quite willing at this time to make grants in this vicinity to actual settlers in their interest. When therefore, in 1725, a grant of territory at Penacook, to be actually settled by one hundred persons of substance and approved character, and their families, was sought of the General Court of Massachusetts, it was readily granted.

The settlement of Penacook was commenced in the course of two or three years, a church was organized, and a minister installed. It was incorporated by the General Court of Massachusetts in 1733, by the name of Rumford. This name was subsequently changed to that of Concord, when, in 1765, soon after the termination of the long controversy with the Proprietors of Bow, it was re-incorporated by the Legislature of New Hampshire.

We have thus briefly glanced at the principle settlements in the Merrimack Valley. Several others were made in the vicinity of Penacook at about this time. Pembroke, which had been granted in 1727 to the heirs and associates of the intrepid Lovewell, in consideration of gallant services against the Indians, began to be settled in 1729. In a year or two afterwards a settlement was commenced at Canterbury, and in 1734 a company of energetic and substantial men from Newbury laid the foundations of Contoocook, subsequently incorporated by the name of Boscawen; while some sixteen years later, another, composed principally of persons from Kingston, began to cut away the forest and prepare for themselves homes at Bakerstown, now Salisbury.

Several general facts arrest the attention of every one investigating the early settlement of this Valley. Allusion has already been made to its physical condition when our forefathers first entered it. An unbroken wilderness extended its entire length from the "Quascatunquen" to the "Winepesaukee," and if we except the diluvial plains immediately upon the river, it shaded a soil, much of it strong and fertile. The woods were alive with game,

and the streams yielded fish in great abundance. Salmon is a luxury in which but few now indulge, yet tradition asserts that the time was, when laborers letting themselves to service not unfrequently stipulated that they should not be compelled to eat salmon, in the season of it, more than five days in a week.

The settlement of Massachusetts Bay was followed almost immediately by a large English immigration, and as the immigrants generally depended for a livelihood upon agriculture, the more desirable lands in the vicinity of Boston, Salem, Ipswich, and other towns near the coast, where the first comers had located, were soon occupied; others, from necessity, were sought farther inland. It is not surprizing therefore, that the Merrimack Valley, not very distant, and very inviting from its rich agricultural resources, should have early attracted their notice. Indeed, hardly seven years had elapsed, from the settlement of Boston, before the foundations of Newbury had been laid.

The early settlers were for the most part English and had been born and bred in the old country. They came to New England with their families, many of them, not merely to benefit their worldly condition, but seeking a wider religious toleration than they could hope for at home. Unconsciously indeed to themselves, they came, led on by Providence for the high purpose of assisting in founding a new State, and of inaugurating in a new world, new principles whose full developement and expansion the existing religious and political prejudices of the old, would not tolerate. A religious element is every where apparent in their movements. Wherever they went their religious teachers led them on, and provisions for the maintenance of religion were among the earliest made. Their clergymen were the best educated and most cultivated body of men among them, and their counsels were ever eagerly sought and freely given. Rev. Thomas Parker was one of the very first of the settlers on the ground, at Newbury. The same may be said of Rev. Ezekiel Rogers, of Bradford; of Rev. John Ward, of Haverhill; of Rev. John Woodbridge, of Andover; of Rev. James McGregor, of Londonderry; of Rev. Timothy Walker, of Concord; of Rev. James Scales, of Canterbury, as well as of several others whose names we must now pass.

Indeed, very many of the old township grants contain express provisions making their privileges conditional upon the immediate



settlement of a learned minister of approved principles. Nor did they forget the cause of education, and one proprietary share of all the lands of the township was frequently exclusively devoted to the support of Schools.

For nearly two hundred years from its settlement, the people of the Merrimack Valley had been almost exclusively devoted to agricultural pursuits. But another great industrial interest was destined ere long to claim their attention, and the great waterfalls of Andover, Pawtucket, Amoskeag, as well as others of less importance, were to be abandoned as fishing places and their vicinities made the sites of populous cities.

The various manufactured articles of domestic consumption, imported to a great extent from abroad, were excessively dear half a century ago, and many of them quite beyond the enjoyment of persons of moderate means. This was particularly the case with cotton and woolen cloths, articles of prime necessity in every household. Nor did the raising and spinning of wool and flax in limited quantities by the farmers of the country meet the universal want. The country needed and felt the need of home manufactures on an extended scale, and the general necessity soon devised means for its relief.

As early as 1793, a company erected and put in operation a proper and regularly constructed factory at the falls of the Parker River, at Byfield Parish, in Newbury, Mass. Its machinery was made at Newburyport, and among its first stockholders was the Hon. William Bartlett of that place. It was originally designed for the manufacture of woolen cloths, but was subsequently changed to a cotton mill. This is asserted to have been the first American Factory, although an adverse claim has been made in favor of another alleged to have been started in Rhode Island some three years previous. A few years later, in 1816, Francis C. Lowell, Patrick T. Jackson, and Kirk Boot, aided by the eminent machinest, Paul Moody, availing themselves of the important improvements of Hargreaves and Arkwright, erected a cotton mill at Waltham, and for the first time in the United States put in operation the power loom.

The success of this enterprise determined its originators to continue it upon a more extended scale. In looking around for a water power sufficient and constant, Pawtucket Falls was selected,

and four hundred acres of land in its vicinity having been purchased in 1821, a mill was erected the following year. This was the commencement of Lowell. Its population numbered 200 in 1820; in 1844 it was 25,163, and in 1853 it had risen to 37,000.

Within the limits we have assigned to the Merrimack Valley, another enterprise of a similar character was started a few years afterwards at Dunstable, of which the city of Nashua is the result.

These manufactures proved profitable to their stockholders and the further extension of them was deemed advisable. Amoskeag Falls, one of the finest water powers upon the river, where it makes a sudden descent of 47 feet, was next sought as the nucleus of a new city. Samuel Blodgett, with a courage and perseverance worthy of a more important success than ever resulted to him, had built a canal around these falls as early as 1816, at an expense of \$60,000, and some twenty-five years afterwards the foundations of Manchester were laid. Upon these has since been reared the most populous city of New Hampshire.

But we must forbear farther allusions to the developements of this great interest at Newburyport, Lawrence, and other places of minor importance.

Several important results have followed the establishment and growth of the manufacturing interest in our Valley:—

The enterprise of its patrons has been rewarded by remunerative returns from their investments.

A ready market near at hand has been secured to the farmers resident in the vicinity of manufacturing towns for all the surplus products of their lands.

A very material reduction in the price of many important articles of domestic consumption has followed. As early as 1839 cotton cloth had fallen in price to about one third of what it was in 1816.

A new impulse has been given to the increase of the population of the Valley. The Census Reports for the last half century show this most conclusively. Its entire population from the forks of the river at Franklin, to its outlet at the ocean, was but 50,150 in 1810, and during the next ten years it increased but 3,028. In the following ten years, (from 1820 to 1830) there was an increase of about one thousand per year, the population in 1830 being only 63,169. But during the period intervening between 1830 and



1840, we find the increase to have been more than twice as great, amounting at the latter date to 86,188 — some six thousand more than the entire population of the State of New Hampshire at the commencement of the Revolution. And if we look still farther we shall find that the ten years preceding the close of the first half of this century show the still greater increase of thirty-six and a half thousand (36,521.) The great cause of this accelerated increase of population is doubtless principally due to the growth of the manufacturing interest; for the same authorities also show that while in 1820 the number of persons engaged in agriculture were about twice and a half the number of those engaged in manufactures, (6,958 and 2,808) in 1840 the number of the latter was nearly double that of the former, (18,444 and 11,213) while the population of Lawrence and Lowell alone in 1845 numbered nearly twenty-two thousand, (21,868) exceeding probably the whole number of farmers in the entire Valley.

The magnitude of our manufacturing interest is not generally appreciated, and a careful study of its authenticated returns will astonish persons not familiar with it. Look for a moment at a single branch of it. The whole amount of capital invested in the manufacture of cotton throughout the United States in 1850, was \$74,500,931, more than one half of which was in New Hampshire and Massachusetts; while of the sixty-two millions dollars worth of manufactured products, these two States furnished twenty-eight and a half millions, a very considerable proportion of which came from the Valley of the Merrimack.

The rapidity with which this great interest has advanced is indicated as plainly perhaps, as in any other way, by the growth of the city of Lowell. Commencing with a population of 200 in 1820 it increased to 3,532 in 1828; to 6,467 in 1830; to 10,254 in 1832; to 12,993 in 1833; to 18,010 in 1837; to 20,981 in 1840; to 25,163 in 1844; to 33,383 in 1850; to 37,000 in 1853.

But our Valley boasts a nobler product than any of the soil or loom,—a product of industrious, intelligent and high souled men, and whenever called upon by the State, the country, or the world, of these it has ever made liberal contribution. In most of the great enterprises and actions that are the subjects of our American annals it has been represented, and oftentimes most ably.



It was the design of the speaker to present to you, on this occasion, the names of some of the natives and residents of this Valley who stand prominent in our general and local histories, for in all the various walks of life there have been many who have attained to eminent positions. There have been pious and learned clergymen; wise and patriotic statesmen; able advocates and lawyers; skillful and devoted physicians, surrounded by an agricultural and manufacturing population noted for its intelligence, its virtue and its industry; but the length of the roll and the delicacy of the task compels the relinquishment of the purpose. Gladly would we tarry to refresh your knowledge of such men as Parker, Barnard, Rogers, Woodbury, Walker, McGregor and Woods, devoted ministers whose piety, good sense and sound learning have done so much to mould the characters of their own and subsequent generations upon the shores of this river; to call to your mind such names as those of Parsons, Thornton, the Websters, the Bells, and others, men who have done honor to themselves and to us as patriots, lawyers or statesmen in many a critical period of our country's history, and by no means forgetting Lovewell, and Stark, and Coffe, and Rogers, to whose valor we owe so much. But our time is well nigh spent. Yet we cannot forget, in passing, to do respectful homage to America's greatest statesman — for Webster was a native of this Valley. Here he received no small portion of the early training which was to prepare him for the great achievements of his after life. And with honest pride we may remember that while his tomb is elsewhere his birthplace will ever remain with us.

Strolling thus through the Valley, this summer's afternoon, recalling its history and viewing its condition, the question arises, what attracts to this locality the busy population here centered in towns and there scattered over the intervening country? And if, when it is responded, that the attraction may be found in the rich intervals, now verdant with promises of golden harvests, and in the waterfalls that turn the ponderous wheels of our great mills, we feel only half satisfied, and childlike ask again, but whence the waterfalls and the intervals? nature answers, that to the Merrimack we owe them both — the Merrimack upon whose banks we have stood a thousand times, but of whose industry and mighty

excavations in ages past we have scarcely thought. But if, still unsatisfied, we would seek its origin and “the farthest head thereof,” we must go beyond “Aquedahtan,” beyond the little streams hastening downward from the sides of the mountains, beyond the vapors that condense upon their summits; upward and farther upward, to the bosom of Him from whom all streams of blessing flow and whose presence is veiled in majesty impenetrable.





